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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000405

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA, PRM FOR PRM/ANE; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL/PRATT; PLEASE PASS TO USAID FOR LAUDATO/BORODIN/NANDY; JOINT STAFF FOR LTG SELVA

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [ETRD](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: PA SENDING FEWER REFERRALS TO ISRAEL; ACCESS IMPROVES FOR EAST JERUSALEM HOSPITAL STAFF

REF: 08 JERUSALEM 2090

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: The Palestinian Authority (PA) is reducing medical referrals to Israeli hospitals, according to the PA Deputy Minister of Health. Referrals continue to East Jerusalem hospitals, which have suffered in recent years due to the closure regime. Following months of negotiations with the GOI, East Jerusalem hospitals began using designated buses on March 2 to transport employees from the West Bank to East Jerusalem, resulting in shorter commute times. One hospital executive credited USG intervention in recent months with the GOI as producing this improved regime. End summary.

PA health care referrals;
No PA boycott of Israeli hospitals

¶12. (C) The PA Deputy Minister of Health Anan Masri told Econoff on March 6 that the PA is reducing referrals to Israeli hospitals. He said that some referrals continue, but at lower levels than last year. According to Masri, in mid-2008, the Ministry began sending more Palestinian referrals from the West Bank and Gaza to East Jerusalem hospitals, which had lost much of their patient base due to reduced access for West Bankers to Jerusalem.

¶13. (C) Masri claimed that the Ministry is not boycotting Israeli hospitals, but rather encouraging more referrals to facilities in East Jerusalem, Jordan, and Egypt to support those hospitals and reduce PA health care costs. Masri noted that Israeli hospitals are twice as expensive as other regional hospitals and that PA ministries are required to reduce costs. He added that the PA is determined to build up its health care capacity in preparation for statehood.

¶14. (C) Masri said that the MOH refused to send injured Gazans to Israeli hospitals during recent IDF operations in Gaza, as doing so would have been "grotesque." He underscored that this was the only instance in which the PA halted specific referrals to Israeli hospitals. Masri said a February 9 New York Times article "severely mis-portrayed the PA referral system." He commented that the article conveyed a general PA boycott of Israel hospitals, which is "wholly inaccurate."

¶15. (SBU) Palestinian East Jerusalem hospitals are not part of the PA hospital system. The MOH refers patients from the West Bank and Gaza to those hospitals, which have a direct system of payment with the PA. PA referrals to Israeli hospitals are paid for by automatic GOI deductions from PA clearance revenue transfers. The GOI deduction in January

for medical services equaled 30 million NIS (USD seven million).

East Jerusalem hospitals expect more business

¶6. (SBU) Augusta Victoria hospital CEO Tawfiq Nasser told Econoff on March 6 that his hospital has been expanding its oncology department since July 2008. As a result of the PA Ministry's decision to send more referrals to East Jerusalem, he expects more business in 2009. He noted, however, that no significant increase in PA referrals to his hospital has yet taken place.

Access and movement improves
for East Jerusalem hospital staff

¶7. (SBU) Nasser reported that staff at six Palestinian East Jerusalem hospitals began using a bus system on March 2 to transport employees from the West Bank to East Jerusalem. Nasser said that the bus system, which the East Jerusalem Hospital Association negotiated with the GOI, has brought staff commutes back down to 30-45 minutes. Nasser thanked the USG, particularly LTG Selva, for his efforts on this issue with the GOI.

WALLES